United Nations A/70/151

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 July 2015

Original: English

Seventieth session
Item 143 of the preliminary list*
Administration of justice at the United Nations

Activities of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is the seventh covering the activities of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, which provides workplace informal conflict resolution services to the Secretariat, the funds and programmes (United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Office for Project Services and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The report contains information on the activities carried out during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2014. It focuses on Secretariat-specific activities, including dispute resolution services offered to staff, outreach activities and initiatives to promote greater conflict competence among staff and managers and observations on systemic issues. Detailed information on the specific activities undertaken for the funds and programmes and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is provided in separate annual reports, which can be found on the intranet pages and/or websites of the respective entities.

* A/70/50.

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I. Informal conflict resolution

A. Workplace conflict and its impact

1. Conflict exists in all areas of life, including organizations. Disputes and disagreements can be catalysts that motivate organizations to learn and evolve, but they can also pose risks and have the potential to erode productive working relationships. If not addressed effectively, workplace conflicts can be detrimental, not only to the individuals involved but also to the strategic organizational objectives. The United Nations is no exception.

2. Informal resolution can reduce the risks posed by workplace conflict. This needs to be coupled with a culture of collaboration and mutual respect, developing managerial and staff competence to handle conflicts and understanding why disputes occur. Nurturing a harmonious working environment includes developing the ability and capacity to promote constructive discourse on timely and preventive measures to minimize the negative impact of conflict.

B. Mandate of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

3. The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services provides confidential and impartial assistance with the aim of resolving a wide range of workplace issues and disputes. It serves staff globally, at headquarters duty stations and in many other locations where the United Nations is engaged in field operations. Conflict resolution officers typically deal with disputes relating to contract renewal, equity of treatment, staff selection, discrimination, the imposition of disciplinary measures, interpersonal issues or situations in which staff members feel that they have been maltreated. In addition, staff members sometimes turn to the Office for help in unravelling bureaucratic knots or when there has been a lack of response to an administrative request or entitlement query.

4. In gathering facts and analysing the issues brought to the Office by individual visitors, case officers may also discern trends and identify the systemic issues underlying conflicts, which they bring to the attention of the Organization's management on an ongoing basis.

5. Increasingly, the Office is focusing on assisting employees to develop the knowledge, attitude and skills to handle situations of conflict constructively (in other words, the development of "conflict competence") and prevent them from escalating. The Office helps to develop conflict competence through thematic informational sessions and workshops, skill-building initiatives and individual coaching when dealing with cases.

6. These broad areas of work are intertwined and interdependent. For example, issues uncovered during interactions with visitors often provide the clues to identify systemic gaps. In addition to developing conflict-handling skills at the transactional level, factors that contribute to conflict revealed through casework inform the design of broader conflict competence and prevention initiatives. As such, these areas of work are then embedded in the core responsibilities of all case officers, thus ensuring a holistic and analytical approach to conflict resolution and prevention.

C. Core principles of practice

7. In delivering its mandate and carrying out its work, the Office is guided by the core principles of independence, neutrality, confidentiality and informality, which are aligned with internationally established standards of practice for the organizational ombudsman profession.

Independence

8. The Office maintains independence from other organizational entities, organs or officials and has direct access to the Secretary-General, the executive heads of the funds and programmes and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and senior management throughout the Organization, as needed; access to information relevant to cases, except medical records; and access to individuals in the Organization for advice, information or opinion on any particular matter.

Neutrality

9. The Office serves as an advocate for justice and fair, equitably administered processes, not on behalf of any individual within the Organization, taking into account the interests, rights and obligations of the Organization and the staff member, and the equity of the situation.

Confidentiality

10. The Office maintains strict confidentiality and does not disclose any information about individual cases or visits from staff members; it cannot be compelled by any United Nations organ or official to testify.

Informality

11. The Office does not keep records for the United Nations or any other party; does not conduct formal investigations or accept legal notice on behalf of the United Nations; does not have decision-making powers; and does not make determinative findings or judgements.

II. Overview of the Office

12. The Office serves the constituencies of the following entities, grouped into three pillars: the Secretariat; the funds and programmes, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and UNHCR. The constituencies are served by the Office's three pillars, each of which was established and is administered by its respective entity or entities.

13. The Office is headquartered in New York and has seven regional offices and a mediation service, as established by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/228. The regional offices are located in Bangkok, Entebbe (Uganda), Geneva, Goma (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Nairobi, Santiago and Vienna. Each office is served by a dedicated regional ombudsman. The ombudsmen for the funds and

programmes and for UNHCR provide services to their global constituencies from New York and Geneva, respectively.

14. The staff of the Office continue to collaborate on a regular basis to harmonize practices. Knowledge-sharing is a crucial form of collaboration among the Office's pillars. Regular participation in the discussion of cases and practice parameters enhances mutual learning and ensures the retention of institutional knowledge. A confidential and secure case management system is a key tool that is shared among the three pillars.

III. Informal conflict resolution: overview of cases and trends

A. Ombudsman cases

15. The Office opened 2,236 cases in 2014, an increase of 7 per cent over the previous year. Of those cases, 1,671 originated in the Secretariat, 431 in the funds and programmes and 134 in UNHCR. After the current system of administration of justice was established in 2009, the number of cases increased steadily in the first three years before stabilizing from 2012 to the present (see fig. I). During the same period, the percentage of cases from Secretariat staff in field missions increased significantly (see fig. II).

Figure I
Number of cases opened by the Office, 2009-2014

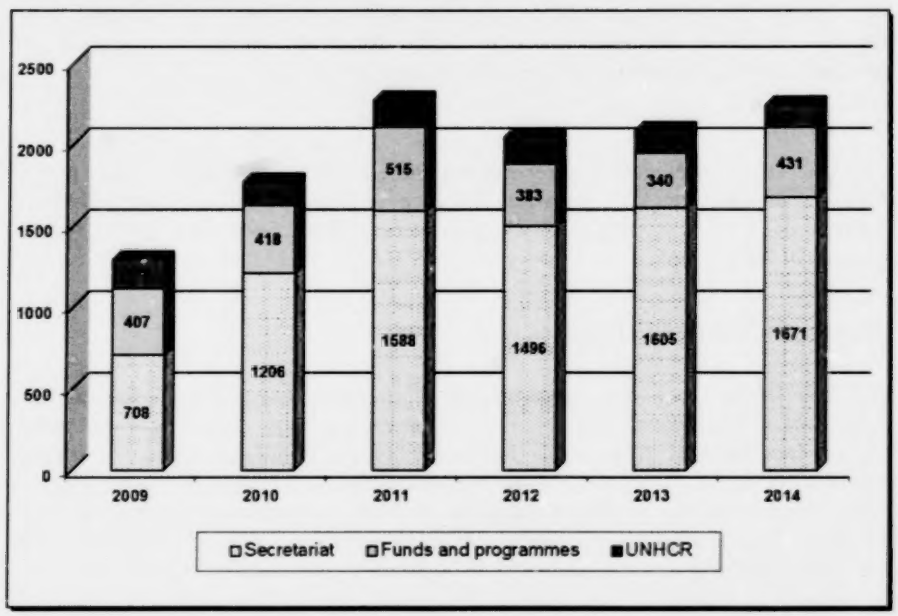
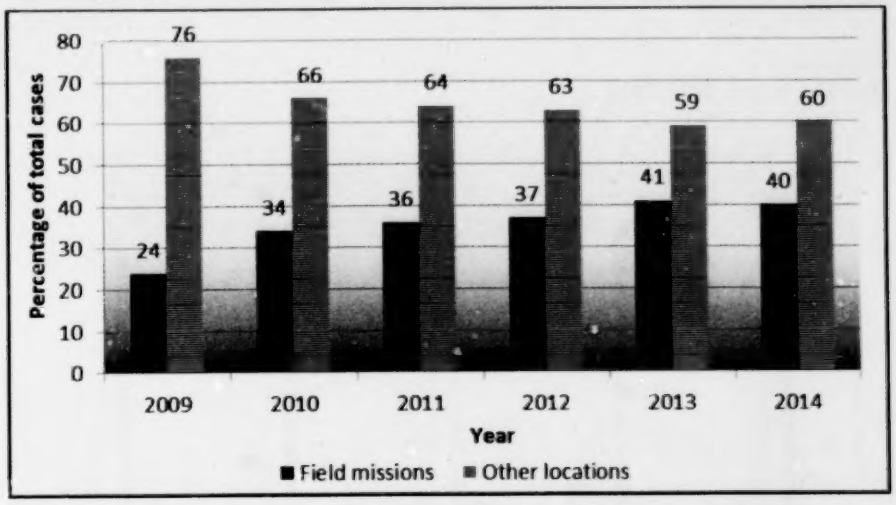
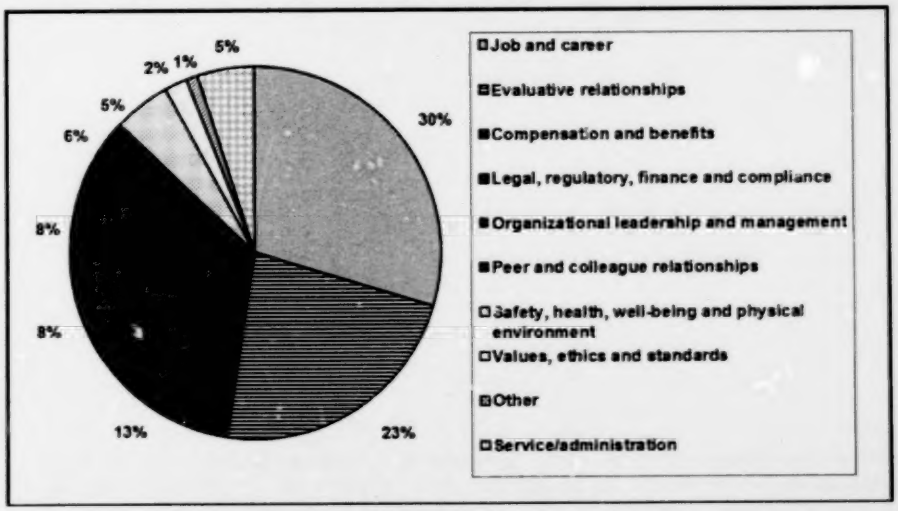


Figure II
Percentage of cases from staff in field missions and at other locations, 2009-2014



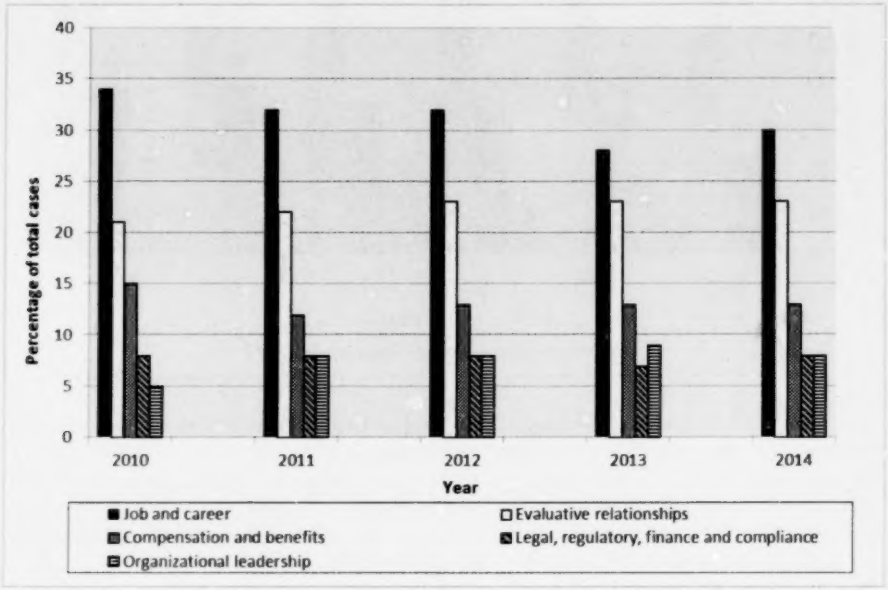
16. Cases often involve primary issues and multiple interconnected matters and concerns. The categories of issues raised by the cases brought forward in 2014 are shown in figure III. Issues relating to the categories of "job and career" and "evaluative relationships" (the relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee) collectively account for more than half the total volume of cases in 2014. While this is consistent with the pattern seen in the previous four years, in 2014 there was a slight increase in job and career issues, from 28 to 30 per cent, while evaluative relationship issues remained constant at 23 per cent.

Figure III
Issues brought to the Office in 2014, by category



17. Over the past three years, 23 per cent of the issues brought to the Office expressly concerned evaluative relationships, second only to job and career issues (see fig. IV).

Figure IV
Top five issues, 2010-2014



18. In 2014, 83 per cent of cases emanated from offices away from headquarters, country and field offices, and field missions[1] (see fig. V). Particularly notable, for the Secretariat, is the fact that 51 per cent of cases in 2014 emanated from field missions, 34 per cent from offices away from Headquarters and 15 per cent from staff in New York (see fig. VI).

[1] Headquarters include: New York, for the Secretariat; New York and Copenhagen, for the funds and programmes; and Geneva and Budapest, for UNHCR. Offices away from headquarters and field offices include various country offices for the Secretariat, the funds and programmes and UNHCR. Field missions are peacekeeping and special political missions.

Figure V
Distribution of cases brought to the Office, by location

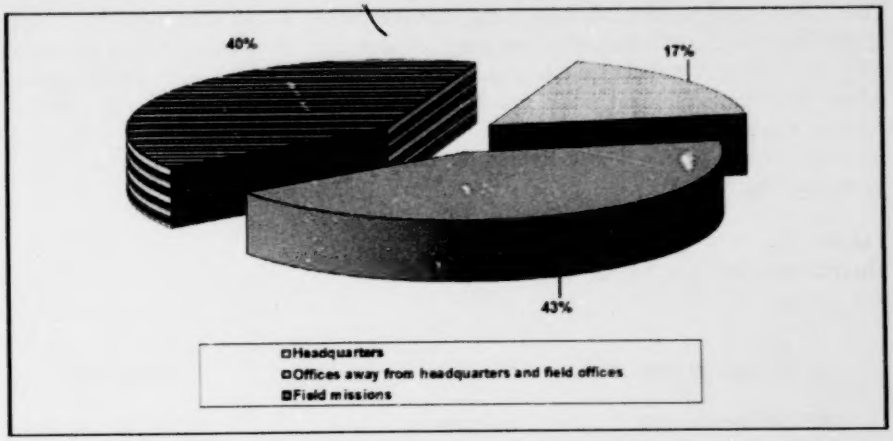
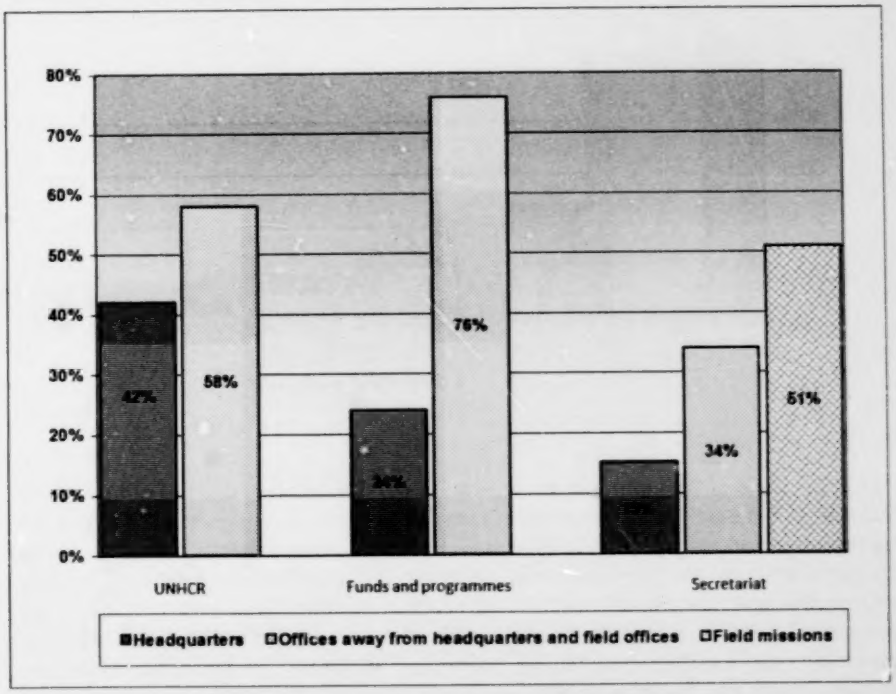


Figure VI
Distribution of cases brought to each of the three pillars, by origin

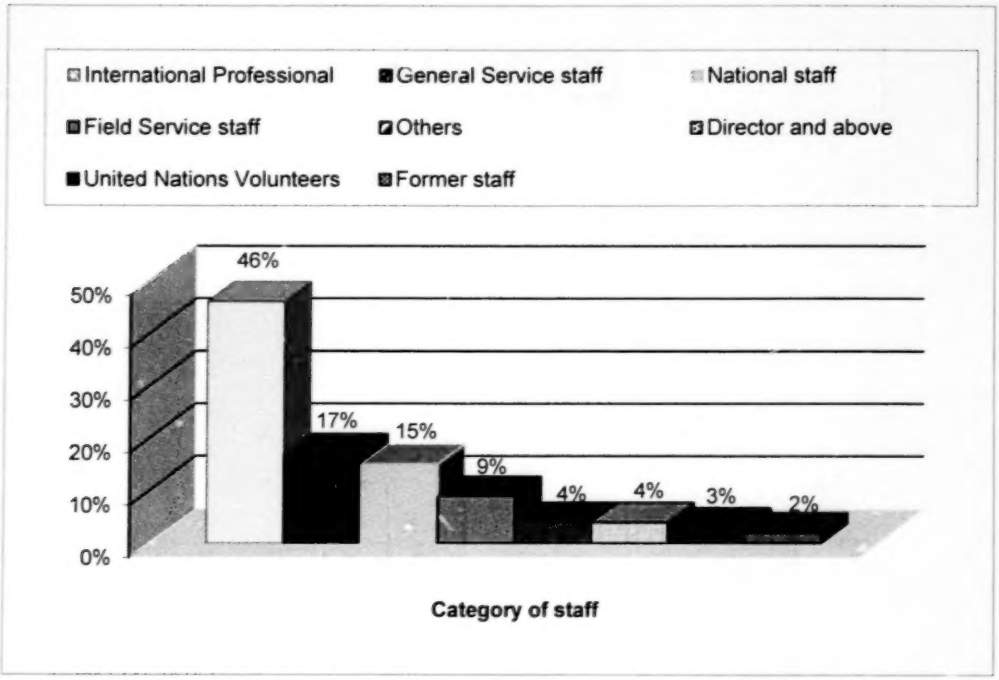


19. The utilization rate (the relationship between the overall number of staff and the number of cases received) in the Secretariat in 2014 was 4 per cent, an increase from the previous year. The rate was highest among staff at the level of D-1 and above, at 9 per cent, and lowest among staff in the General Service category, at

2 per cent. Women used the services more than men: the overall rate was 3.4 per cent for men and 5.2 per cent for women.

20. Of the total number of cases brought to the Office, 46 per cent came from staff in the international Professional category; 17 per cent from support staff (General Service category) located at Headquarters and offices away from headquarters; 15 per cent from national staff (including staff in the Professional and General Service categories); and 9 per cent from Field Service staff (applicable only to the Secretariat) and others. Those figures are consistent with the overall trend in past years (see fig. VII).

Figure VII
Distribution of cases, by occupational group



21. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/203, requested information on the number and nature of cases brought forward by non-staff personnel. During the reporting period, 145 cases involved non-staff personnel, reflecting an increase of 20 per cent from the previous year. Of those, 57 per cent came from individual contractors and consultants and 43 per cent from other categories of non-staff personnel. There was a shift in the dominant issue category compared with the previous year. In 2013, the largest proportion of cases, 35 per cent, concerned compensation and benefits, while in 2014 the most frequently occurring issue pertained to jobs and careers, which accounted for 34 per cent of the cases, compared with 22 per cent in 2013 (see the table below for further information).

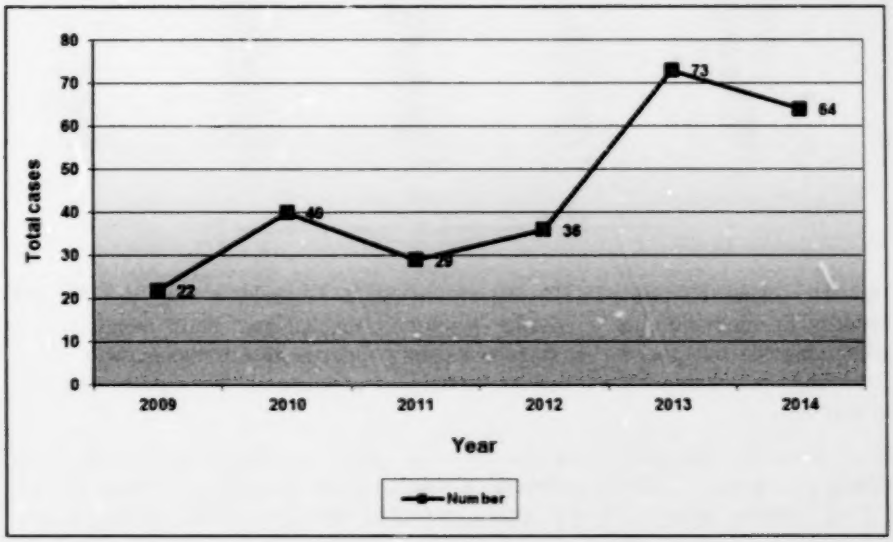
Nature of cases from non-staff personnel

	Distribution (percentage)	
Category of issue	*2014*	*2013*
Job and career	34	22
Compensation and benefits	18	35
Evaluative relationships	12	7
Legal, regulatory, finance and compliance	10	9
Peer and colleague relationships	8	2
Organizational leadership and management	6	8
Safety, health, well-being and physical environment	4	2
Service/administration	4	11
Values, ethics and standards	4	4

B. Mediation cases

22. In the six years since the Mediation Service was first established, progress has continued in promoting mediation as an effective and informal way of resolving workplace disputes while enhancing harmony and collaboration. The case volume has tripled since 2009, with the volume in 2014 (64) only slightly below that of the previous year (73) (see fig. VIII). Of the cases recorded in 2014, 57 emanated from the Secretariat and 7 from the funds and programmes and UNHCR.

Figure VIII
Number of mediation cases opened, 2009-2014



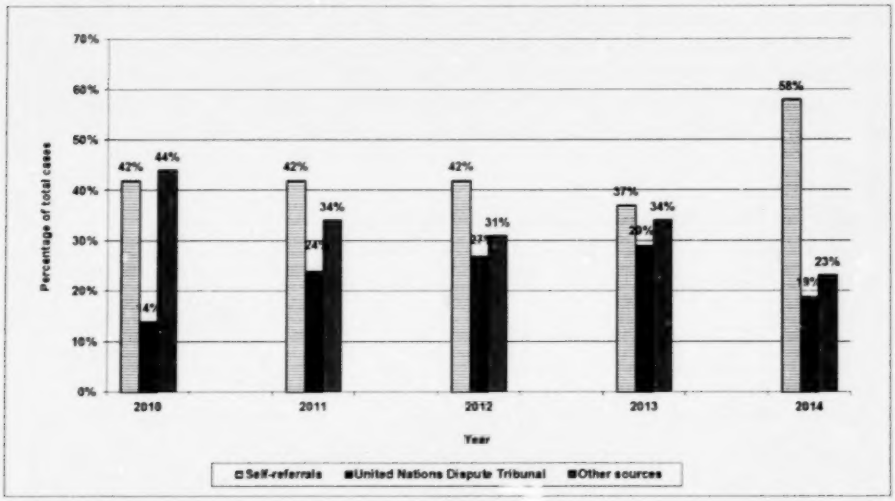
23. Of the 64 cases received for mediation in 2014, 46 have been completed, including 2 group processes. Of those completed cases, 33 resulted in a settlement

agreement and 13 did not. Twelve cases were not mediated because one or both parties chose not to do so following a preliminary consultation or because the case was deemed unsuitable for mediation. Six cases opened in 2014 were continuing as at the time of writing of the present report.

24. Mediation cases are complex in nature and often involve several bilateral and joint meetings with the parties before and during the mediation. Multiparty and group processes are counted as single mediation cases, regardless of the number of people involved. A group process, which can involve as many as 30 people, can help a group to understand, prevent and resolve conflict by providing a safe way of raising issues and identifying consensus-based solutions.

25. In 2014, 12 mediation cases (19 per cent) were referred by the United Nations Dispute Tribunal, 37 (58 per cent) were self-referrals (i.e., the party or parties to a dispute requested a mediation) and 15 (23 per cent) were referred by other sources, including the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, the Management Evaluation Unit and case officers within the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services. Figure IX provides comparative figures since 2010.

Figure IX
Mediation cases by source, 2010-2014[2]



26. The increased rate of self-referrals signals a heightened awareness of the benefits of mediation as a conflict resolution mechanism. Staff members are addressing conflict at an earlier stage and seeing opportunities to manage workplace issues themselves rather than allowing matters to escalate and having to resort to the formal system.

27. Mediation activities conducted in 2014 often included resolution of long-standing litigation. In some instances, a single case referred to mediation by the United Nations Dispute Tribunal settled more than one filed action. In other cases,

[2] The figure has been revised and updated to consistently reflect percentages of mediation case referrals from 2010 to 2014.

mediation helped colleagues to restore or initiate effective working relationships, resolved misunderstandings that had the potential to derail projects, helped to reconcile work-life balance needs with performance requirements or assisted teams in avoiding potential conflicts and becoming more resilient and productive. In some cases, while the mediation did not result in a written agreement, the process was nevertheless useful in helping to clarify issues between the parties.

C. Regional engagement

28. In its resolution 68/254, the General Assembly stressed the importance of ensuring access for all staff members to the system of administration of justice, regardless of their duty station. More recently, in its resolution 69/203, the Assembly recognized that in-person access to the Office was a challenge for staff in the field, including for those in special political missions. The establishment of the seven regional ombudsman offices has enabled the Office to decentralize its services, take into consideration regional and local dynamics and improve access to staff and stakeholders.

29. The challenges notwithstanding, the Office is committed to making it easier for field staff, especially those in remote locations, to gain access to its services. Doing so is all the more important considering that field mission environments are typically physically arduous and emotionally stressful and often dangerous. The regional offices provide a useful presence in various parts of the globe, but their work is not limited to the geographic area in which they are physically based. To use the entirety of its resources as efficiently and effectively as possible, the Office is employing a flexible and mobile approach.

30. In-person mission visits to duty stations where there is no resident ombudsman remain important. The value of face-to-face meetings and outreach cannot be underestimated, especially in establishing trust and dealing with particularly sensitive situations. It is the experience of the Office that such visits are highly appreciated by the staff, especially in remote and difficult duty stations, where they are seen as a sign that the Organization cares.

31. In 2014, Professional staff of the Office led missions to more than 40 duty stations to conduct outreach, build skills and provide informal conflict resolution services. This included trips to peacekeeping and special political missions such as the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan, the United Nations Office for West Africa, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa; regional commissions without a regional ombudsman, such as the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Africa; and United Nations offices in locations such as Bonn (Germany), Brindisi (Italy), Panama City, Mexico City, Lima, Port of Spain, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Bogor (Indonesia), Islamabad and Phnom Penh. In addition, mission visits were made to

the many duty stations within the larger mission areas of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, including Bunia, Kisangani, Goma, Uvira and Bukavu, El Fasher and Khartoum, and Juba, Yambio, Torit, Wau, Kuacjok and Aweil.

32. To further enhance its capacity to meet regional or specialized needs, the Office continued its work on its regional on-call programme to support its mediation mandate, as needed, with the selection of six on-call mediators from the joint United Nations-World Bank roster in the second half of 2014.

IV. Outreach activities: promoting conflict competence and informal resolution

A. Building skills and awareness

33. In its resolution 69/203, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide data and other relevant information on the Office's outreach activities, focusing on conflict resolution, systemic issues and conflict competence, as well as on promotion of the benefits of informal resolution.

34. Engaging in outreach activities is part of the responsibilities of every Professional staff member of the Office. Whether at Headquarters, in a regional office or on mission, each ombudsman, mediator or conflict resolution officer creates opportunities to personally interact with staff and managers to promote the use of informal resolution and to better understand the nature of workplace conflict. A key strategic goal of the Office is to promote conflict competence by encouraging, developing and improving skills to better prevent and resolve conflict in the workplace. This area of focus goes hand in hand with the Office's core mandate of informal conflict resolution and conflict prevention. It is also a natural evolution: in the initial years after the introduction of the current justice system and the expanded informal system, the focus of outreach activities was primarily on informing staff of the existence of the Office and its services. While that task remains important, the emphasis is now shifting to providing staff and managers with practical skills and insight into how to better prevent and manage conflict.

35. In 2014, the Office conducted more than 200 outreach activities, including 83 presentations, 59 workshops and many meetings with senior officials and stakeholder groups, at duty stations worldwide. The activities can be categorized as follows:

(a) Information sessions, which include presentations, town hall meetings and inductions, mostly in the format of briefings with question-and-answer periods. The main purpose is to provide information about the Office and informal resolution, including some elements of conflict competence;

(b) Workshops, which are a combination of lectures, exercises and other interactive elements to raise awareness of aspects of workplace conflict and build specific skills. They normally last for two to three hours and include at least 10 participants;

(c) Meetings with senior officials and stakeholder groups, which form part of the Office's partnership and stakeholder engagement efforts and include senior officials at the policymaking and decision-making level, officials dealing with administration, such as in the Office of Human Resources Management, the Department of Field Support or peacekeeping missions, the formal system of administration of justice, staff associations, medical services and staff counsellors.

36. All outreach activities are tailored to the specific audience, but normally include an informational element about the services available through the Office, the importance of addressing conflict early on so as to prevent escalation, information on how informal resolution can address disputes collaboratively and have a greater chance of maintaining harmonious working relationships, and some skill-building elements, such as pointers on how to have a difficult conversation. During the reporting period, the number of activities that included a skill-building component increased, with the number of workshops rising from 42 in 2013 to 59 in 2014.

37. Among the many outreach activities carried out in 2014 was a week-long event organized by the regional office in Nairobi on the theme "Discovering intersections: an exploration of the art of negotiation". It consisted of expert-led seminars, intensive training and short skill-building sessions for staff members of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and other United Nations agencies in Nairobi.

38. In 2014, MONUSCO went through a major downsizing and reconfiguration exercise, with its locus shifting from Kinshasa to Goma. Against that backdrop, the regional office in MONUSCO conducted skills-oriented workshops for senior management during change management sessions and for representatives of the national staff union, which contributed greatly to reducing tension in a volatile environment.

39. In response to a specific need, the regional ombudsman in Entebbe worked with the management of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to organize a one-week training programme for mid-level managers and supervisors on managing and resolving conflict. Held in Entebbe from 27 to 31 October 2014, it included sessions on collaborative negotiation, power, rights and interests, case studies and mediation role plays.

40. The regional offices in Bangkok, Geneva, Santiago and Vienna included components on conflict management in their general presentations and briefings to staff, both for the specific duty station and in connection with mission travel. The ombudsmen continued to deliver informational presentations, specifically at new staff induction sessions at Headquarters and in the field. Such presentations are also commonly delivered at initial town hall meetings during mission visits to give staff a general overview of the role of the Office and conflict resolution resources in the Organization.

41. The Office values the feedback collected from participants at the various outreach sessions and uses it to adjust and tailor future sessions. Overall, there is growing interest in and demand for more skill-building activities. The Office has also received positive feedback on group processes conducted, both at Headquarters and in the field, which have helped to encourage greater team collaboration and communication.

42. The website of the Office remains an important gateway for staff seeking in-depth information on its role or contact information for an ombudsman near them. The secure and confidential contact form on the website is regularly used by staff submitting their cases to the Office. In 2014, the website was visited, on average, 2,000 times per month.

B. Promoting the benefits of informal resolution

43. It is normal practice to emphasize in all outreach activities the benefits of informal resolution. Informal resolution processes allow the individuals involved to retain a high degree of control, which means that solutions and agreements tend to be durable. When choosing to resolve conflicts early and informally, it is also more likely that the conflict can be contained to the individuals directly involved, rather than setting into motion formal processes that involve other offices and individuals and also often lead to the hardening of adversarial positions. Informal resolution and early intervention can contribute to preventing issues, such as interpersonal conflicts, from escalating to formal cases.

44. Another benefit is that any workplace concern can be brought to the Office, whereas the formal system is predicated on the dispute being related to an administrative decision. Informal resolution is flexible and can entail such methods as one-on-one coaching, shuttle diplomacy and mediation. The benefits of mediation are increasingly being recognized. By working to eliminate conflicts of interest, build trust, facilitate open communication, clarify roles and responsibilities and help parties to understand differences and appreciate diversity in a team, mediation can contribute not only to preventing conflict but also to promoting accountability and building a collaborative work environment.

45. An additional benefit is that informal resolution can be seen as helping to mitigate many of the risks and hidden costs stemming from workplace conflict, such as poor morale, lower productivity, absenteeism and sick leave and diversion of attention from the substantive work agenda.

46. The Office has proactively and continually made efforts to encourage early and informal resolution of disputes, as have senior managers, staff representatives and various parts of the administration of justice system. The Chef de Cabinet issued a directive to senior managers throughout the Secretariat in April 2014 in which she encouraged the use of the informal system in addressing conflicts and recalled their responsibility to ensure a healthy and harmonious work environment.

47. There was also a special effort to focus on promoting the use of mediation as a conflict resolution tool, both at Headquarters and in the field. A joint outreach mission to MONUSCO was conducted in September 2014, with the Mediation Service and the regional office in Kinshasa jointly delivering mediation awareness sessions in Kinshasa, Goma and Bunia while also conducting mediations in the mission area. On-call mediators also contributed to outreach efforts to promote the benefits of mediation, including by giving a presentation for United Nations staff in Mexico City in November 2014.

48. Presentations encouraging the use of informal resolution, including mediation, were also given at Headquarters in April 2014, one to executive officers and another to visiting directors and chiefs of mission support. Similarly, as part of the induction

programme organized by the Office of Human Resources Management for incoming senior officials, the Office participated in sessions on preventing and handling conflicts in the workplace, at which the benefits of informal resolution options were emphasized.

49. Within the administration of justice system, there have been concerted efforts to promote informal resolution through increased collaboration between the formal and informal channels. In the cases dealt with by the Management Evaluation Unit and the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, efforts are made to identify possibilities for informal resolution and guide parties towards it.

V. Collaboration within the Secretariat

50. Continuous engagement with senior officials and administrative units within the Organization is integral to the efforts of the Office to build and sustain strategic working partnerships. The United Nations Ombudsman has direct access to the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Chef de Cabinet to discuss matters relating to workplace conflicts and informal resolution, and he regularly meets the under-secretaries-general of various Secretariat departments and special representatives of the Secretary-General to promote the informal resolution of workplace conflict.

51. In addition, during the reporting period the United Nations Ombudsman and his staff continued to participate in meetings of the Management Performance Board and the Management Committee, as well as of ad hoc working groups and other committees that deal with issues affecting staff. Such exchanges offered the Office opportunities to share insights and lessons learned, including observations on systemic issues, gleaned from the cases that it receives.

52. For example, in 2014 the Office provided feedback to the Office of Human Resources Management in the context of the proposal to revise the performance management system. In addition, there was close collaboration relating to the design of a new learning and development strategy, in particular as regarding the incorporation of training on conflict management, harassment prevention and collaborative negotiation skills.

53. In 2014, the Office continued to work closely with the Department of Field Support to offer its support to the Department's initiative to launch an awareness campaign in all peacekeeping missions relating to situations that sometimes lead to workplace conflict. The goal of the programme, known as "Inside the Blue", is to help staff and managers to differentiate between issues of legitimate exercise of authority, performance management and misconduct. It is designed to stimulate open communication and encourage staff and managers to address the issues at an early stage. In addition, in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources Management, the Office provided input to guidance to managers encouraging greater use of informal resolution in cases of allegations of harassment or abuse of authority.

54. With many cases emanating from peacekeeping missions, the Office continuously collaborates with the Department of Field Support to provide feedback and brainstorm on systemic issues and case-specific work. In 2014, the Office participated in a working group that dealt with the streamlining process in the

African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and contributed input, in particular on internal communication aspects.

55. The Office regularly collaborates with the Ethics Office on themes of common interest, as it did in 2014 in the context of the United Nations Leadership Dialogue, which was focused on treating one another with tolerance and respect. It was a subject that resonated strongly, given that incivility in the workplace had also been identified as a frequent root cause of conflict. It was also highlighted by the United Nations Ombudsman in a meeting of the Management Performance Board when he stressed the importance of senior officials acting as role models in that regard.

56. The Office collaborates with offices and administrative units within the Organization to better understand how issues are interconnected and identify synergies and areas for improvement. For example, regular meetings were held with the Department of Field Support and the Office of Human Resources Management to provide feedback on key processes and issues and to discuss specific cases. The Office continued to engage with the Medical Services Division, the Office of the Staff Counsellor and the Emergency Preparedness and Support Team of the Office of Human Resources Management, in addition to the Critical Incident and Security Management Unit of the Department of Safety and Security, in relation to individual cases and on initiatives to promote staff welfare, well-being and resilience.

57. The Office worked closely with the Office of Staff Legal Assistance on cases requiring legal counsel and on matters in regard of which the Office assisted with informal resolution. The option of referring visitors to the Office of Staff Legal Assistance was particularly useful when staff seeking informal resolution needed to understand the legal framework of their cases. Such collaboration also elucidated the crucial role that each office plays in finding ways to promote the early and informal resolution of conflicts.

58. In addition to interacting with offices of the Secretariat, the Office also regularly maintains contact with staff unions as important stakeholders at the various duty stations where regional offices are based and in connection with mission visits. In 2014, this included collaboration on training and awareness-raising and facilitating communications in connection with downsizing or other processes that affect many staff.

VI. Root causes of conflict: systemic issues

59. The Office identifies broad-based systemic issues on an ongoing basis, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/233, in which the Assembly emphasized that the role of the Ombudsman was to report on broad systemic issues that he or she identified, as well as issues that were brought to his or her attention. A systemic issue exists independently of the individuals involved.

60. Many conflicts can be traced back to systemic issues, which may be deeply rooted or stem from gaps or inconsistencies in the Organization's policies, procedures, practices or structures. When recognized, systemic issues present an opportunity for the Organization to learn and affect positive change that can contribute to preventing some types of conflict.

61. Systemic issues are identified through the cases and issues brought forward by staff, during interactions with the parties involved in conflicts and through direct observation.

62. The Office maintains a continuous dialogue with stakeholders and relevant offices in the Secretariat, both at Headquarters and in the field, to provide feedback on observations and to hear perspectives from the management side. This helps to gain a fuller understanding of issues that may be systemic and in many cases allows management to take measures that are within their purview to tackle issues raised. The present section includes a selection of systemic issues that the Office considers important, some of which have been highlighted in previous reports but merit continuing attention.

A. Abusive behaviour and incivility in the workplace

63. There continued to be an influx of cases from staff who sought help in informally resolving what they perceived as disrespectful, harassing or discriminating behaviour, in some cases coupled with alleged abuse of authority. Such issues appear to be prevalent in a broad array of duty stations and involve staff at various levels. The severity of the offending behaviour spans a wide range, from incivility and abrasiveness to abusive and threatening action that could border on misconduct. Whether on the "lighter" or more extreme side of the scale, such behaviour can have a devastating effect on the individuals affected, often translating into lack of productivity, stress or sick leave. Such situations also frequently cause ripple effects for the overall working environment, stifling productivity, dialogue and open communication.

64. When faced with such behaviour, staff may choose to file a formal complaint under the procedures outlined in the Secretary-General's bulletin on prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority (ST/SGB/2008/5). As stated in the previous report, however, in many such instances the behaviour in question may not rise to the level of misconduct (A/69/126, para. 56). In some cases, it may actually be a legitimate exercise of a manager's authority that is mistakenly framed as harassment. Nevertheless, there may be a pervasive sense of injustice and hurt that propels an individual to the formal process, which could entail a fact-finding investigation. Whatever the reasons for choosing a formal route, such processes can be time-consuming, difficult, adversarial and costly, while not necessarily reaching any conclusion that addresses the underlying problem.

65. Where a staff member opts for informal resolution, the Office addresses the concerns through individual coaching, facilitated dialogue, mediation or group interventions tailored to the specific situation and circumstances. In the past year, the Office continued to encourage greater use of informal resolution methods in dealing with abrasive behaviour or cases of alleged harassment, including through close cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management and the Conduct and Discipline Unit of the Department of Field Support. By way of systemic interventions, the Office provided feedback in the preparation of guidelines for managers in dealing with allegations of harassment. The guidelines encourage all involved, including the senior official responsible for handling the issue, to seek support for informal resolution.

66. Nevertheless, informal resolution is a voluntary process and there will be instances of poor conduct in which the individuals involved will not seek assistance from the Office. For example, staff or managers may lack insight as to the impact of their behaviour on colleagues and team morale. Alternatively, they may be aware of the impact, but simply have no interest in altering their workplace conduct or have no incentive to do so. On the receiving end, a staff member affected by another's bad behaviour may choose to suffer in silence rather than seek the services of the Office, perhaps owing to a sense that there is minimal likelihood that any change will occur or out of fear of the possible adverse consequences of bringing up the issue.

67. The Office has observed that there is sometimes a belief that there is a trade-off to be made between workplace courtesy and programme delivery. An abrasive and strong-handed staff member or manager may be tolerated by more senior leaders because there is a sense that he or she is effective and "gets the work done". A deeper analysis, however, is likely to uncover negative ripple effects in terms of staff health, productivity and morale. It is therefore important to stress the role of senior managers in setting the tone and creating a culture of respect, collaboration and civility within the department, office or mission that they lead, lest they be seen as complicit in tolerating offensive behaviour. If a manager's offensive behaviour causes distress to others, then those in more senior positions who are aware of the conduct need to take management action. This could be in the framework of professional development, performance management or enlisting executive coaching services.

68. In examining the full canvas of behaviour that may cause upset, it should be noted that managers, too, in many instances feel victimized or stifled in dealing with "difficult" or abrasive staff members and interpersonal conflict. It is therefore essential to create an environment in which honest performance feedback can be given and received constructively without being labelled as "harassment".

69. As a complement to managerial action, the Office is available to those who seek its assistance in situations relating to disrespectful behaviour, whether a manager, a staff member or a senior official. The Office is also continuing its efforts to increase the Organization's sensitivity to the need to address improper behaviour and to build skills that better equip staff at all levels to communicate respectfully.

Ongoing efforts and opportunities

70. Ongoing efforts and opportunities in this regard include the following:

(a) The Secretary-General may wish to reiterate the importance of civil and respectful behaviour in the workplace and that he expects senior managers to set the tone and be role models in that regard;

(b) Staff members at all levels should be encouraged to consider informal resolution options, including mediation, in situations involving offensive or abrasive behaviour;

(c) The Secretariat may wish to consider managerial coaching options in some situations in which a manager's conduct is causing distress and expand training that will better equip managers and staff to give and receive constructive feedback.

B. Strengthening investigations: a continuing imperative

71. In several of its past reports, the Office has noted the need the Organization to improve its capacity to investigate complaints of misconduct. This remains a matter of concern, both for those staff members who are the subject of an investigation and for those who submitted a complaint that is being investigated. Given that those issues have been highlighted over the past seven years, they are not described again herein. The Office notes, however, that there may be opportunities to reduce the volume of cases that result in a formal investigation. As noted in paragraphs 64 and 65 above, informal resolution options, such as mediation, could be considered in handling some complaints alleging harassment or abuse of authority.

72. Where informal resolution is not appropriate or feasible, there remains a need for a strong and efficient investigative capacity. This is recognized at the highest level of the Secretariat and the Office continues to take note of the efforts being made by the Organization in that regard.

Ongoing efforts and opportunities

73. Ongoing efforts and opportunities in this regard include the following:

(a) Current efforts by the Secretariat to strengthen investigations and uphold the due process rights of the parties should continue;

(b) In cases of complaints alleging harassment or abuse of authority, more use of informal resolution options, including mediation, should be promoted and encouraged, when appropriate.

C. Staff serving in dangerous regions

74. Staff regulation 1.2 (c) provides that staff members are subject to the authority of the Secretary-General and to assignment by him or her to any of the activities or offices of the United Nations. In exercising that authority the Secretary-General is to seek to ensure, having regard to the circumstances, that all necessary safety and security arrangements are made for staff carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to them. That United Nations staff have increasingly come under attack over the past 10 years has prompted some staff representatives to call for a review of security policies worldwide. In their view, the inclination for the Organization to stay and deliver in the face of escalating violence exposes staff to higher risks than before and raises the question whether staff serving in dangerous regions are adequately protected. Security and safety has also been identified in the context of the Secretariat-wide enterprise risk management exercise as a critical risk.

75. Mandates for peacekeeping and political missions have evolved and no longer presume that there is a peace to keep. United Nations personnel are deployed to areas in which peace agreements exist in name only, where civil strife remains rampant and every day poses a host of dangers and risks. There is additional stress for staff in remote, deep-field duty stations, far removed from even the most basic services and welfare elements. Such conditions can be psychologically or physically challenging.

76. In addition, staff members may not be fully informed of the risks that are involved before going to serve in dangerous regions. Indeed, even if they are aware, they may not have a realistic assessment of their ability to cope.

77. It is a normal assumption that the Organization is responsible for providing support infrastructure and is mindful not to expose its staff to undue risks and dangers. There is an organizational obligation to support the resilience of staff, which in some of today's environments is being seriously tested. Special attention may therefore be called for at the workforce planning stage and during screening for some mission assignments. There is also a need to consider a regimen of institutionalized support and rotation for staff in volatile work environments.

78. On the larger issue of the Organization's role and responsibility towards staff in such precarious environments, the Office welcomes the creation by the High-level Committee on Management of a working group co-chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security and UNHCR with the objective of identifying the scope of the Organization's duty of care towards its personnel.

Ongoing efforts and opportunities

79. Ongoing efforts and opportunities in this regard include the following:

(a) Security and safety having been identified as a critical risk to the Organization, mitigation actions will need to consider the duty of care when deploying United Nations staff in volatile environments;

(b) There may be opportunities to review some human resources and other operational processes, practices and policies to ensure that staff posted o dangerous and/or remote duty stations are adequately prepared and supported to protect their well-being.

D. Communicating effectively with staff

80. In previous reports, the Office has highlighted how the lack of effective communication can frequently be traced as the root of conflict. This remains a pervasive issue, manifested at various levels and in various contexts. At one end of the spectrum, it could be simply a matter of a staff member not understanding his or her salary statement because no one ever took the time to explain it. At the other end, the lack of effective corporate communication on organizational goals and objectives constitutes a risk in that it can contribute to organizational silos, competing priorities and staff disaffection. Between those two end posts are several other types of situation in which communication is crucial.

Communicating with the individual staff member

81. More than half of the cases dealt with by the Office pertain to jobs and careers and evaluative relationships. The latter refers to the relationship between a staff member and his or her supervisor or supervisee. Often, in examining the underlying issues, the lack of open, honest and respectful communication emerges as a contributing factor to, if not the cause of, the conflict. Some of those are related to performance management, where there may have been a lack of ongoing feedback or challenges in giving or receiving constructive feedback. Even in the category of "job and career", which is where the highest percentage of cases fall, many of the

situations contested are related in some way to lapses in communication or could have been mitigated had there been fuller and clearer communication, whether related to processes, such as staff selection or rosters, or to the specific situation of the individual concerned.

82. The Office has also seen many cases in which staff members are frustrated because they are left in the dark for long periods about the status of an administrative request, have not been informed of the reasons for a particular decision or find themselves in a bureaucratic maze. In many such cases, the provision of a simple update to the staff member or an explanation in plain language could perhaps have avoided a sense of unfair treatment.

Communication for organizational change

83. Communication is not to be equated with merely disseminating information: there must be outlets for exchanges and discussions. The Office has previously highlighted the importance of participatory processes in reducing the potential for conflict in connection with mission downsizing and restructuring (see A/67/172, paras. 132-139). Effective communication is particularly crucial when staff members are exposed to rapid changes or crises. It is important that the pressing demands for swift action and decision-making that such situations often impose on managers do not eclipse the need for meaningful communication. The tone, mode of communication and language used in communicating with staff on difficult issues are also important. There has been fruitful collaboration between the Office and the Department of Field Support on this front, resulting in the development of guidance on communication in times of mission downsizing. This remains important, given that many missions are going through transformations that affect many staff.

84. Transformation is also under way on a larger scale in the Secretariat as a whole, with the implementation of multiple initiatives and process systems, such as Umoja, mobility and hot-desking, which will affect staff over the coming years. It will be crucially important in that context to have clear and consistent messaging and communication on the high-level goals of the transformation, as well as its implications for individuals and the workplace.

85. In looking at the quality of the working environment and staff motivation, it is perhaps also relevant to stress the importance of internal communication, relating not only to specific reform initiatives, but also to the overarching goals and direction of the Organization's work and the values underpinning it. Without it, more provincial and competing notions of priorities can easily take root and contribute to organizational silos, which have been identified as a critical risk for the Organization.

Ongoing efforts and opportunities

86. Ongoing efforts and opportunities in this regard include the following:

(a) The Secretariat may wish to consider means to emphasize that it is important for managers to communicate clearly, respectfully and in a timely fashion with staff, for example as an integral part of the training and performance evaluation of managers;

(b) As has been done in several instances, the Secretariat is encouraged to continue to mainstream an internal communication strategy as part of every mission downsizing, structural change or reform initiative;

(c) There also need to be opportunities to reinforce messaging about the overarching goals and values of the United Nations and how all staff members play a part.

VII. Looking ahead

87. The Organization is embarking on several transformational reforms that will better equip it to respond to growing and increasingly complex demands. The introduction of Umoja will fundamentally change administrative processes and enable new and different service delivery models. The new mobility policy will not only entail more structured staff movements, but also have an impact on how staff are selected and jobs classified. In the field, peacekeeping and political missions will continue to operate in volatile environments, with expansions and contractions that conform to new and changing mandates.

88. Such changes and transformations can be both exhilarating and disconcerting. They bring opportunities and worries. Accordingly, it will be essential to have inspired leadership and change management where informal conflict resolution is strongly supported and collaboration across organizational units encouraged.

89. While much progress has been made, continued efforts are needed to promote a culture in the Secretariat where informal resolution and mediation are resorted to more naturally. From both the staff and management sides, knowledge and experience of mediation as a conflict resolution tool remain limited. Habitually, staff members and decision makers and administrative officers tend to follow the path of processes with which they are most familiar from past experience or observations. The Office is advocating that informal resolution processes, including mediation, be incorporated into relevant administrative instructions, guidelines and rules so that they can become part of the management fabric of the Organization.

90. The Office is committed to supporting staff and managers in these times of change. It will continue to promote the value of early action and prevention, together with measures to help to foster conflict competence and harmonious working environments.

United Nations A/70/152

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 July 2015
English
Original: Arabic/English/French/
Spanish

Seventieth session
Item 18 of the provisional agenda*
Macroeconomic policy questions: international trade and development

Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/200, entitled "Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries". It contains the outcome of the monitoring by the Secretary-General of the imposition of such measures and an analysis of their impact on the affected countries, including the impact on trade and development. The report reflects the replies of Member States and selected international organizations (set out in the annex) to the note verbale sent by the Secretary-General requesting pertinent information. The report also includes additional data collected by the Secretariat.

The responses from Member States indicate their positions against the imposition of unilateral economic measures as an instrument of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Such measures are viewed as being in conflict with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of international law and the rule-based multilateral trading system, and they infringe the sovereignty of States. Member States expressed their concerns about the negative impacts of unilateral economic measures on the socioeconomic development of the affected countries. International organizations reported that unilateral sanctions tend to adversely affect the population in the affected countries and hamper international trade. The number of unilateral economic measures has increased in recent years.

* A/70/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/200, entitled "Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries". In the resolution, the Assembly urged the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries that were not authorized by relevant organs of the United Nations or were inconsistent with the principles of international law as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and that contravened the basic principles of the multilateral trading system.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue monitoring the imposition of such measures, study their impact on the affected countries, including the impact on trade and development, and report on the implementation of the resolution to the Assembly at its seventieth session.

3. Accordingly, the Secretariat, in a note verbale dated 1 April 2015, invited the Governments of all Member States of the United Nations to provide their views and relevant information regarding the existence of unilateral sanctions and the impact these may have had on their trade and development. The replies received from 20 Member States are reproduced in annex I to the present report.

4. Relevant organizations, programmes and agencies both inside and outside the United Nations system were also invited to provide information and analyses concerning recent developments in the subject area. The replies received from three organizations are summarized in annex II to the present report.

II. Summary of replies received from Member States, United Nations bodies and international organizations

5. Member States expressed their positions against the imposition of unilateral measures. Unilateral economic measures are considered to be violations of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of international law and the rules-based multilateral trading system. They also infringe the sovereignty of States. According to the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States,[1] "no State may use or encourage the use of economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights".

6. Member States that identified themselves as countries affected by coercive economic measures (the Central African Republic, Cuba, Latvia as a member of the European Union, Madagascar, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Zimbabwe) reported negative impacts of such measures on their trade. In particular, these Member States indicated that unilateral sanctions tended to have severe humanitarian consequences and adverse effects on vital economic sectors of the affected countries, thereby harming the welfare of the population. They expressed their concerns about the negative impacts on their long-term socioeconomic development and requested other Member States to refrain

[1] General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV).

from resorting to such measures. Other respondents also expressed their concerns about the adverse impact on the economic development and living standards of both the targeted and non-targeted countries.

7. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) reported that some of the economies it monitors, those of Madagascar, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, had been negatively affected by economic sanctions.

8. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) indicated that unilateral sanctions had hampered trade and development in the Syrian Arab Republic. ESCWA suggested that a revised approach to economic sanctions was needed, preserving the viability of State institutions and public administration in supplying essential goods and services, and acknowledging the importance of local stakeholders in providing essential products and services. When advocating a new approach to sanctions based on the urgent humanitarian and institutional crisis, strong international support was necessary.

9. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported that unilateral measures had had significant negative effects on Cuba, and possibly on third States. Substantial losses had been incurred by the Government, enterprises and citizens in obtaining critical goods and services, including medicine and food. Sanctions had severely limited the development of strategically important sectors, such as information and communications technology.

III. Monitoring the imposition of unilateral measures and studying the impact of such measures on the affected countries

10. Since 2000, new sanctions have been imposed 38 times on 35 targets (see table below). Of those measures, 14 are no longer in effect.

Unilateral economic measures imposed during the period 2000-2015

	Target	*Year in which the sanction was imposed*	*Year in which the sanction was removed*
1	Belarus	2006	2008
2	Belarus	2010	–
3	Central African Republic	2003	2005
4	Central African Republic	2014	–
5	Côte d'Ivoire	2004	–
6	Cuba	1960	–
7	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	2008	–
8	Democratic Republic of the Congo	2003	–
9	Egypt	2013	2014
10	European Union	2014	–
11	Fiji	2006	2014
12	Georgia	2006	2013
13	Guinea	2005	2010

	Target	*Year in which the sanction was imposed*	*Year in which the sanction was removed*
14	Guinea-Bissau	2003	2004
15	Guinea-Bissau	2012	2014
16	Haiti	2001	2005
17	Honduras	2009	2009
18	Iraq	2012	–
19	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1987	–
20	Lebanon	2007	–
21	Liberia	2007	–
22	Libya	2011	–
23	Madagascar	2010	2014
24	Mali	2012	2012
25	Moldova	2012	–
26	Myanmar	1997	–
27	Occupied Palestinian Territory	2007	–
28	Somalia	2010	–
29	South Sudan	2014	–
30	Sudan	2004	–
31	Syrian Arab Republic	2003	–
32	Tunisia	2011	2011
33	Uganda	2014	–
34	Ukraine/Russia	2014	–
35	Uzbekistan	2005	2009
36	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2015	–
37	Yemen	2012	–
38	Zimbabwe	2001	–

Source: United Nations Secretariat; based on various sources.

11. The number of unilateral economic measures has increased in recent years. Between 2000 and 2009, 18 measures were initiated (i.e., an average of 1.8 per year), with 17 new measures introduced since 2010 (an average of 2.8 per year). Re-establishment of economic relations in long-standing cases, such as Cuba and Myanmar, has been initiated but had not yet concluded as of mid-2015.

12. Recent trends suggest that the use of smart (or targeted) sanctions, such as arms embargoes, asset freezes and travel bans, has been increasing, although broadly-defined trade embargoes still exist. Empirical evidence indicates that unilateral measures, especially broad trade embargoes, can have severe unintended consequences, such as adverse impacts on human rights, public welfare and the long-term growth prospects of the affected country.[2]

[2] See A/HRC/27/32 and A/69/97.

Annex I

Replies received from Member States

Brunei

[Original: English]
[27 April 2015]

Brunei does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

Brunei has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Cambodia

[Original: English]
[10 June 2015]

Cambodia's position is against the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Cambodia is of the view that the imposition of such coercive measures violates the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, according to which no State may use or encourage the use of unilateral economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights. In addition, it contravenes the rules of the World Trade Organization, especially those concerning the basic principles of the multilateral trading system, aimed at preventing trade discrimination. Finally, the coercive measures adversely impact international economic cooperation and the development efforts of developing countries. Cambodia considers that unilateral economic measures are not admissible and should not be taken against any countries, including developing nations. Cambodia urges that these be eliminated and therefore requests a recorded "yes" vote on resolution 68/200.

Cambodia has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Central African Republic

[Original: French]
[28 April 2015]

The imposition of coercive economic measures is not the best means of exerting pressure on States, since these countries are under intense economic pressure. Sanctions affect the population rather than the political leaders who caused them to be imposed. Such measures affect the country's economy, and the poorest people suffer the consequences while their leaders maintain a normal lifestyle, as essential commodities become very expensive. This also leads to the impoverishment of the middle class, a decrease in trade volume and a decline in standards of living.

Financial sanctions affect contributions to the national treasury, since tax revenues fall as a result of the downturn in the economy, particularly in trade. As the private sector is not well developed in the Central African Republic, it is often the salaries of government officials that keep the money supply flowing. As public funds dry up, salary arrears begin to accumulate, and traders and farmers can no longer sell their products. The embargo on goods leads to a rise in prices that has a serious impact on those who are less affluent (the majority). It is therefore essential to stop the application of coercive measures and find alternatives.

Chile

[Original: English]
[13 May 2015]

Chile does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

Chile has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Congo

[Original: English]
[5 May 2015]

The Congo does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. The use of such measures, unfortunately, harms the economies of developing countries and has negative effects on international cooperation.

The Congo still believes that the international community should take effective and binding measures for ending the use of coercive measures that go against the United Nations goals and principles. The Congo reaffirms its commitment to the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. No State may impose unilateral economic, political or any other type of measures or encourage their application in order to coerce another State to carry them out.

Cuba

[Original: English]
[16 April 2015]

Cuba does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. The Republic of Cuba rejects all unilateral economic coercive measures, since they are inconsistent with the principles of international law as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and contravene the basic principles of the multilateral trading system. Cuba considers that such measures directly violate the sovereignty of developing countries, and that they hinder the advancement of national development programmes and the achievement of better social and economic realities.

Cuba has been affected by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America since 1962.

For over 50 years, the United States Government has imposed a blockade policy on Cuba, ignoring the systematic and growing clamour of the international community to immediately put an end to it.

In spite of President Obama's recent steps towards the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba and his statement regarding his intention to embark on a debate with Congress aimed at ending the blockade, at present the blockade and its extraterritorial scope are firmly upheld by the United States Government. This has manifested itself particularly in the unprecedented harassment of Cuban banking and financial activity over the past few years. Consequently, Cuba's normal progress in all spheres of economic, social, cultural and political life continues to be seriously hindered.

The blockade inflicts important adverse effects on the material, psychological and spiritual well-being of the Cuban people and imposes serious obstacles on its economic, cultural and social development.

By virtue of this policy, Cuba continues to be unable to freely export and import products and services to or from the United States and cannot use the United States dollar in its international financial transactions or hold accounts in that currency in third-country banks. It is also not allowed to have access to loans from banks in the United States, from their branches in third countries or from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank.

There is not one single sphere of economic and social activities of the Cuban people that is exempt from the destructive and destabilizing action imposed by this illegal policy.

The Cuban health system is an area that particularly suffers from the permanent lead weight of the United States genocidal blockade, causing severe adverse effects on the health and well-being of the Cuban people. This basically includes the need to obtain medicines, reagents, spare parts for diagnostic and treatment equipment, instruments and other supplies in distant countries, often making it necessary to resort to intermediaries in distant markets and thereby unnecessarily increasing costs for the sector.

Although just a few of these adverse effects can be calculated in monetary terms, no figure, no matter how high, can show or explain the intangible costs of the damage of social and human significance, given the impossibility of being able to access state-of-the-art supplies, technology, knowledge and other resources that are vital for this sensitive area.

In Cuba, one of the most comprehensive social protection programmes has been established, permitting the eradication of hunger. The population's food security, closely related to the economic, social and environmental development dimensions, is a strategic priority for Cuba. Nevertheless, the State policy carried out by the United States for more than five decades against Cuba violates the right to food of the Cuban people, since it sets up obstacles to regular access for Cubans to international food markets, including United States producers.

In the current circumstances, the blockade is being built as a serious barrier to granting loans to Cuba under favourable conditions, transferring cutting-edge technology, mobilizing external capital, attracting direct foreign investment, protecting the environment and fully integrating Cuba into the world economy.

Losses borne by the Cuban economy each year total billions of dollars generated by lost incomes from exports of goods and services; expenses caused by the geographical relocation of trade, especially that derived from frozen assets and the adverse monetary and financial effects of the exposure of economic actors to exchange rate variations (the dollar cannot be used in any payments) and the increased cost of financing.

One of the sectors most affected by the blockade is the tourism industry and the economic activities associated with it, such as services, travel agency operations and logistical support, areas that are decisive in this sector. By virtue of the blockade laws, the Cuban tourism industry cannot enter the United States market, which sends tourists in an organized manner; this includes cruises and the use of Cuba's marinas and water sports facilities.

The economic damage caused to the Cuban people as a result of the application of the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba, taking into consideration the depreciation of the dollar in regard to the price of gold and the international market, totals $1,112,534,000,000 in spite of the decreased price of gold as compared with the year 2013.

There are numerous examples of unilateral economic coercive measures in the world, all of them in violation of international law as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations. The blockade of the United States Government against Cuba is the longest set of unilateral economic coercive measures ever to be applied in history. This policy and its extraterritorial scope have tried to isolate our country simply because it defends its sovereignty and its right to freely choose its future.

Such a policy comes as no surprise since the kernel of the United States blockade against Cuba resides in the following words: To bring about "hunger, desperation and overthrow of [the Cuban] Government".[3]

The complicated and multi-branched body of laws and political and administrative regulations that codify the blockade has not been removed. Much to the contrary, it has been strengthened and its validity reaffirmed. The annual extension of the Trading with the Enemy Act, passed as a war measure in 1917 to restrict trade with nations considered to be hostile, is an eloquent example of this. On 5 September 2014, President Obama once again renewed this policy of aggression and hostility towards Cuba.

Cuba and the United States are not at war. Cuba has never launched any military aggression against the United States, nor has it promoted acts of terrorism against the American people. It is unsustainable to justify the measures being taken under this ordinance.

The blockade also qualifies as an act of genocide by virtue of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 and as an act

[3] Lester D. Mallory, "Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Mallory) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom)", 6 April 1960, United States Department of State.

of economic warfare according to the Declaration concerning the Laws of Naval War, adopted by the Naval Conference of London of 1909.

The blockade against Cuba must end. It is the most unfair, severe and prolonged unilateral system of sanctions that has ever been applied to any country. On 23 occasions, the General Assembly, with an overwhelming majority, has declared itself to be in favour of respect for international law, compliance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the right of the Cuban people to choose their own future for themselves. That must be respected.

Ecuador

[Original: English]
[4 May 2015]

Ecuador does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Ecuador considers the imposition of unilateral economic measures to be a transgression against the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of United Nations Member States.

Ecuador has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

The imposition of unilateral economic sanctions as a form of political and economic pressure threatens the principles of non-interference and equality among Member States, as well as the principle of sovereignty, contained in the Charter of the United Nations. Ecuador has expressed itself accordingly when such sanctions have occurred, as is the case with Cuba, Iran and Venezuela. It is also important to note that such sanctions affect the principle of presumption of innocence, as they are applied on a discretionary basis without proper investigation or judicial order.

Latvia

[Original: English]
[29 April 2015]

Latvia does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

Latvia has been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014. An embargo was imposed on 6 September 2014 by the Russian Federation on imports of beef, pork, poultry, fish, fruit, vegetables, cheese, milk and other dairy products from the European Union, including Latvia.

In 2013 Latvian exports of goods to the Russian Federation amounted to €1,163.1 million, which was 11.6 per cent of total Latvian exported goods; 4.5 per cent of that was included in the Russian Federation's sanctions list. The share affected by Russian embargoes was 0.5 per cent of total Latvian exports of goods or 0.2 per cent of the gross domestic product of Latvia. This has a potential direct impact on the manufacturers of Latvian goods.

Madagascar

[Original: English]
[22 May 2015]

Madagascar does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

Madagascar was affected by the suspension of eligibility for the benefits of the African Growth and Opportunity Act by the United States of America during 2010-2014. The sanctions are no longer effective.

The Act is a non-reciprocal trade preference programme that provides duty-free treatment to United States imports of certain products from eligible sub-Saharan African countries. Madagascar was no longer considered eligible and its participation was suspended on account of the political crisis that resulted from a "coup" that overthrew a democratically elected president. As a result, all "Zone franche" textile manufacturing enterprises were closed and thousands of jobs were lost. The poverty rate increased to 75.3 per cent (poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines, percentage of population) according to the World Development Indicators by the World Bank. The economic growth from 1995 to 2008, with the exception of 2000, dropped from 7.1 per cent to 3.7 per cent, with an outlook of 5.4 per cent for 2015, according to the African Development Bank Group.

Political events or political crisis should not be considered a condition for the suspension of the commercial or trade activities of a developing country, in view of the social and humanitarian consequences and the direct impact on the economic development of that country, which ultimately affects not only the Government but also its populations, who suffer the most.

Mongolia

[Original: English]
[6 April 2015]

Mongolia does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

Mongolia has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Oman

[Original: English]
[8 June 2015]

Oman does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. The Sultanate of Oman believes that the use of economic sanctions against developing countries is inconsistent with the principles of international law and the basic principles of the multilateral trading system as referred to in the Secretariat's note Oman has never been subjected to any economic measures from any country and has never used such measures against any country, nor does the Sultanate of Oman

agree with the imposition of economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

Oman has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Paraguay

[Original: English]
[23 April 2015]

Paraguay does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

Paraguay has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Measures and instruments of coercion should be applied only after general debate according to international law, among all members of the international community and/or the United Nations Security Council. Such measures should be carefully regulated.

Senegal

[Original: English and French]
[20 April 2015]

Senegal does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. The foreign policy of Senegal is designed to achieve people-centred economic development and respect for and protection of human rights. This policy continues the quest for peace and stability, as well as the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Senegal has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Sri Lanka

[Original: English]
[13 May 2015]

Sri Lanka does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Sri Lanka does not approve of the use of unilateral economic measures against any country, as it is inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Sri Lanka is of the view that the implementation of such measures impedes the rule of law; the transparency of international trade and freedom of trade and navigation.

Sri Lanka has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]
[30 April 2015]

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic categorically rejects the policy of imposing unilateral coercive measures, whether economic, commercial or financial, outside the framework of international law, against Member States, in particular against developing countries, for the purpose of achieving narrow political ends. It also rejects the pretexts used by States that impose such measures to justify their conduct.

The views of the Syrian Government rejecting such measures are consistent with the unequivocal calls by the United Nations in its annual resolutions, the most recent of which are General Assembly resolutions 68/200 and 69/180, on all Member States to refrain from imposing any unilateral economic measures against other States, in particular against developing countries. It is also consistent with the affirmation by the United Nations that such measures are contrary to the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principle of respect for the sovereignty of States, and to the principles of multilateral trade law. The United Nations has also warned against the disastrous impact of such measures on the efforts of Member States to achieve development for their peoples; the impediments they pose to the rights of the peoples of the affected States, in particular children and women, to economic and social development, a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, and to food, medical care and education and the necessary social services; and the impediments they pose to investments and the trade sector, which is the engine of development.

In assessing the international response to United Nations recommendations prohibiting the imposition of such measures, particularly at a time when we are attempting to create an ambitious post-2015 development agenda, it is cause for consternation that the list of States affected by such measures continues to grow. It includes Cuba, Syria, Palestine, Iran, the Sudan, Venezuela, Belarus, the Russian Federation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Zimbabwe and others. By the same token, the list of States in violation of the relevant United Nations resolutions is also growing. The United States of America and the European Union, along with their allies such as Australia and Canada, are in the forefront of States and entities imposing such measures against developing States. That demonstrates clearly that they are States that place no value whatsoever on the global consensus rejecting such international behaviour, or on the authority of the United Nations and its resolutions on this matter. On the contrary, they deliberately ignore the disastrous impact of such measures on human rights in the affected States.

The Syrian Arab Republic has been suffering from the effects of unilateral economic measures taken by the United States of America since 2003. Those measures cover a number of areas, including financial transactions, banks and the export to Syria of equipment, including medical equipment and medicines. They also prevent the maintenance and supply of necessary spare parts for Syrian civilian aircraft. The scope of the measures imposed on Syrian individuals and institutions expanded and intensified during 2011, which saw the launching of a systematic terrorist campaign against Syria. The European Union, the United States of America and the League of Arab States, in addition to several Governments of States belonging to the so-called Group of Friends of the Syrian People, have imposed

successive packages of unilateral coercive economic measures against the economic sectors most vital for the support of national resources such as oil, electricity, trade, investment and finance. Those measures are exacerbating the suffering and need of Syrians, and magnifying the effects of the destruction and the decline in the humanitarian, economic, social, cultural, environmental and health sectors caused by the activities of armed terrorist groups that receive full support from some of the very same Governments that are imposing those unilateral economic measures against Syria. As a consequence, millions of Syrians have been displaced and have become refugees.

As a result of those measures, Syria is now facing mounting challenges in a number of areas, including foreign currency supply; trade financing, in particular for imports; the suspension of Syrian financial transactions, whether for personal or commercial purposes; the suspension by certain States of export of their products to Syria; difficulties importing materials and equipment necessary for domestic production; a rise in transport costs; and the loss to the Syrian economy of a large portion of its export revenues, in particular oil revenues. Syria is also suffering from an increase in inflation rates, a rise in commodity prices and difficulties ensuring the supply of commodities, in particular those required for the full implementation of assistance and humanitarian response plans, such as food, medical supplies and medicines. This situation has had a negative impact on the access of Syrians to primary services, the standard of living and the availability of jobs.

Unilateral economic measures imposed against Syria by the European Union are being driven by the policies of those of its Governments with the most radical positions on the Syrian crisis, notably the British and French Governments, and are as damaging as they can possibly be both to the livelihoods of Syrians and to the economy of Syria. Those measures have deliberately targeted the sectors most vital to meeting Syrians' basic needs in a time of great difficulty, and the resources most important for maintaining the public treasury. In resolutions dated 2 and 23 September 2011, the European Union imposed a ban on the import of oil from Syria and prohibited investment and financing in the Syrian oil sector and the delivery to Syria of Syrian-denominated banknotes printed in European Union member States. In its Decision 2013/255/CFSP, the Council of the European Union prohibited any financial, oil-related, technical, economic or technological dealings with any Syrian companies or within Syria. It also prohibited the provision by its members of any technical or financial assistance for the construction of new power plants for the production of electricity in Syria. The European Union has extended those sanctions against Syria until June 2015.

A number of United Nations agencies and development programmes have begun to monitor the disastrous impact of the imposition of unilateral coercive measures against Syria, including in terms of gross domestic product, economic growth, production, job opportunities, income, major commodity prices and trade. Unfortunately, however, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has not yet begun monitoring, or reported on, the disastrous impact of those measures on the standard of living of Syrians or national and United Nations capacities for assistance and humanitarian response to the needs of Syrians.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates the importance of practical and non-selective compliance of the policies and practices of the Governments of all Member States with the principles of international law, the

Charter of the United Nations, multilateral trade law and human rights law. It also stresses the need for immediate compliance with United Nations resolutions calling for a cessation of the imposition of unilateral economic, financial and commercial measures against other States, in particular developing countries, as a means of political and economic coercion. Such compliance would ensure the fulfilment of one of the requirements for achieving sustainable development for all peoples of the world, without exception, allowing them to enjoy the benefits of prosperity and a dignified life.

Tunisia

[Original: English]
[1 May 2015]

Tunisia does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Tunisia views the imposition of unilateral economic measures as a violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, particularly the principle of sovereign equality of States. Furthermore, such sanctions are an infringement on the rules governing the multilateral trading system. The negative effect of these sanctions is certain. They seriously hamper the efforts of developing countries to improve the living conditions of their peoples and to achieve development. Tunisia believes that these sanctions generate a very heavy humanitarian cost.

Tunisia has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

Turkey

[Original: English]
[5 June 2015]

Turkey does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Only in certain cases may "smart/targeted sanctions" be useful.

Turkey has been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014. Unilateral sanctions, especially those with extraterritorial effects, impact not only the targeted countries, but third countries as well, having an adverse effect on regional economic cooperation, as well as international trade and economic cooperation on a global scale. United States and European Union sanctions imposed on Iran, especially those targeting energy and banking sectors, constitute current examples of sanctions having far-reaching effects, profoundly affecting third countries in the process. Turkey has also been negatively affected by the sanctions imposed against Russia.

Unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran target, among other things, the energy and banking sectors, which unequivocally hurt the economies of many third countries and disrupt legitimate trade. Neighbouring States are affected more directly than others in terms of the adverse effects on trade and development.

We believe that sanctions applied in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations are an important tool for the maintenance of international peace and security. To be credible and effective, they must be targeted carefully and take into account the applicable rights of due process for the individuals concerned and the need to minimize their adverse consequences for third parties. In this sense, "smart sanctions", which target the specific regimes in countries without harming the civilian populations, should be at the heart of the United Nations sanctions system.

Turkey wishes to make a correction to the text of the report of the Secretary-General on unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries (A/68/218), in annex I, page 16. The text should read, "Turkey has been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2010-2012".

United Arab Emirates

[Original: English]
[26 April 2015]

The United Arab Emirates does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Such actions go against the principles of international law, and have proven to be a failure.

The United Arab Emirates has not been affected by economic sanctions during the period 2012-2014.

The United Arab Emirates, based on the principles of international law embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of the multilateral trading system, does not apply any sanctions or unilateral economic measures as a means of political coercion or economic against any other country, since it is proven that such measures have a negative political and economic impact on the people of the targeted developing countries.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

[Original: English and Spanish]
[24 April 2015]

Venezuela does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Such measures are against the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States. In particular they are an attack on respect for equal rights among States, the self-determination of peoples and non-interference in internal affairs, as well as the inalienable right of States to choose their political, economic, social and cultural systems, without the interference of another State. The imposition of such measures can affect the normal political, economic, social and cultural development of the country under them, and is an attack on the human rights of its people.

Venezuela has been affected by economic sanctions. On 9 March 2015, the Government of the United States adopted Executive Order No. 13692, in which

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, declared a national emergency in order to face "the situation in Venezuela", including the situation of the Government, that "constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States". The Bolivarian Government believes that the report to be presented by the Secretary-General must go beyond the mere quantification and declaration of measures, modes and types and the identification of countries that have imposed sanctions and those that have been subjected to them. Moreover, the report has to address the illegal and unlawful character of sanctions, in compliance with international law, emphasizing that they run counter to the spirit and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and of countless General Assembly declarations and resolutions that condemn their adoption, and given the negative effect of sanctions on the peoples of those countries under them, including the violation of human rights. At the same time, the report must request States, in strong terms, to refrain from resorting to such measures in an attempt to break the will of a developing country.

Zimbabwe

[Original: English]
[18 May 2015]

Zimbabwe does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Zimbabwe believes in the resolution of differences through dialogue. Unilateral economic measures constitute a violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as of international law. The sanctions also constitute a blunt instrument that often hurts the economies and citizens of targeted poor nations.

Zimbabwe has been under economic sanctions imposed by the United States of America and the European Union since the year 2001.

Economic and financial sanctions have been imposed by the United States of America since 2001. The sanctions were imposed through the adoption of the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001. The sanctions bill is still binding. Under section 4 (c) of the Act, the United States Government instructs United States executive directors in all international financial institutions to oppose and vote against: (a) any extension by the respective institutions of any loan, credit or guarantee to the Government of Zimbabwe; (b) any cancellation or reduction of indebtedness owed by the Government of Zimbabwe to the United States or any other international financial institution.

Economic and financial sanctions have been imposed by the European Union since 2002. The sanctions restrict trade between Zimbabwe and the European Union. The impacts of the sanctions are: severe economic distress; decline in Zimbabwe's balance of payments support; sustained decline in offshore financing; sustained decline in long-term capital; the decline of infrastructure; poor performance of the health, education and other social services owing to the withdrawal of donor support; rapid decline in levels of foreign direct investment and growth; negative impacts on regional cooperation, i.e., the Southern African Development Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; and constraints on the country's policy space.

Annex II

Summary of replies received from United Nations bodies and international organizations

Economic Commission for Africa

[Original: English]
[23 April 2015]

The Economic Commission for Africa does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries if it is not in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/200.

The Commission reports that Mali, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe, Uganda and, to an extent, Madagascar have been affected by economic sanctions during 2012-2014.

The member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions against Mali immediately after the military's coup d'état in March 2012. At the same time, the African Union imposed political sanctions and the United States of America suspended its official development assistance to the Government. The effectiveness of the sanctions are indisputable, as the landlocked country depends on imports and the use of neighbouring countries' ports for economic activities. Consequently, the military enforced the re-establishment of constitutional order shortly after the sanctions were imposed.

In Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS imposed sanctions in April 2012 after the military's coup d'état overthrew the interim President. The European Union imposed travel bans and asset freezes on key figures in the military, and the United States suspended approximately half of its $140 million in foreign aid. ECOWAS sanctions were effective, as they were relieved within a two-month period under the condition that the transitional Government ensure a definitive return to constitutional normality. Subsequently, the European Union granted €160 million to consolidate democracy, strengthen the rule of law and accelerate economic recovery in the country.

The case of Zimbabwe is complex, as there are differences of opinion as regards whether sanctions are imposed to coercively pursue democratization in the country or merely to punish it for previous deeds. As a result, some of the main trade partners, including Australia, Canada, the European Union and the United States, have enforced trade embargoes, while United Nations sanctions target illicit trade of high-value commodities such as diamonds.

In 2013, Uganda signed the Anti-Homosexuality Act, which further criminalizes homosexuality. The Act was condemned by the international community, and Uganda lost millions in foreign aid primarily from the United States and the European Union. Over 20 per cent of its budget comes from donors, and future aid cuts will therefore have a direct effect on the economy. The suspension of preferential trade agreements, such as the American Growth and Opportunity Act, may have an effect on economies similar to that of trade embargoes.

Madagascar was one of the nations that suffered most, as its exports were suspended from 2009 to 2014 owing to the domestic turmoil in the country in 2009, having larger negative impacts on the economy than the political turmoil itself.

The African Union frequently imposes sanctions on member States when unconstitutional changes of government occur on the continent. The sanctions consist primarily of political restrictions and, at times, economic embargoes as well. In the context of preventive diplomacy, the United Nations works closely with regional organizations to prevent disputes from arising or, in the event of conflicts, limit their escalation and spread. The extent to which the United Nations Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (and the regional economic communities) harmonize and coordinate affects domestic and international security, and therefore improved synergy is called for between the two for sanctions to be more efficient. The cases of Mali and Guinea-Bissau are prime examples of a regional economic community's interventions leading to further stability in the countries concerned.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

[Original: English]
[23 April 2015]

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

ESCWA has observed that Syria has been affected by sanctions imposed by Arab countries, Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States since 2011. The effect of the sanctions cannot be completely isolated and assessed without taking into consideration the overall impact of the four-year conflict on the social and economic conditions in Syria and its neighbouring countries.

To illustrate, the unilateral measures by the European Union have been targeted as follows: financial transactions with the European Investment Bank; assets freeze and visa ban; arms embargo; trade restriction on oil; trade restriction on dual-use goods; and embargo on cargo flights.

In 2011, the immediate economic consequences of the protests were the collapse in revenues from tourism and the drop in private investments. With the escalation into an armed conflict, the Syrian economy has experienced a sharp decline in gross domestic product with the contraction in productive activities and trade, worsened by the looting and destruction of manufacturing facilities, and the resulting reduction in government tax revenues. A severe deterioration has also occurred in the main financial indicators.

The overall impact of the conflict on the Syrian State and population is unprecedented in terms of humanitarian and social crisis: tremendous human losses; 7.6 million internally displaced persons and 3.8 million refugees in neighbouring countries; deterioration in health-care conditions and an increase in the child mortality rate; decrease in primary education; scarcity of essential commodities and public services; destruction and damage to more than 2 million housing units and to large parts of the country's infrastructure asset base. At the end of 2014,

unemployment was above 60 per cent, with more than half of the population living below the poverty line and relying on emergency aid from foreign donors. The steep depreciation of the Syrian pound, the increase in the price of petroleum products subject to sanctions, and the general price inflation have affected mainly vulnerable and poor households, weakening their food security and their standard of living.

The original and declared political goals of the European Union sanctions were to increase pressure on the authorities to put an end to the violence, withdraw the army of the Syrian Arab Republic from besieged towns and cities, implement democratic reforms and engage in an inclusive national dialogue. The ultimate goal was a national political transition away from the current governing structure. None of these goals has been achieved.

The political aim of sanctions can be broken down into five intermediate objectives: impose personal and economic consequences for the authorities and State officials; isolate the authorities and the country; inflict economic hardship; weaken the cohesion within the authorities' power structures; and decrease the support of the population for the governing authorities.

While economic hardship is indisputable, the impact on the balance of power and on the course of the conflict has not been as initially envisaged. Very few of the blacklisted businessmen have switched to the opposition; beneficiaries of the current structure are more entrenched; new businessmen and intermediaries have emerged and have enjoyed financial gains; and part of the business community and the middle class have relocated to neighbouring countries and the rest of the region. The sanctions have inadvertently contributed to these dynamics, creating significant new economic relationships and networks that thrive on incentives for the continuation of the conflict rather than for the support of a peace process. Furthermore, the authorities have been able to benefit from increasing economic support from external backers such as Iran and Russia.

The economy of war has expanded with the fragmentation of the country and of the Syrian economy between areas controlled by the Government, the opposition and the extremist groups of Al Nusra and the Islamic State, with new dynamics of authority among local actors for the control of natural and economic resources. In particular, the shift in control of certain oil and gas production areas and facilities outside of the influence of the central Government has had several consequences: an increase in the dependence of the Government on external backers; the development of a black market and oil export activities to other trading partners; and coordination between the Government and opposing groups over the exchange of hydrocarbon products. The relatively limited destruction and damage to energy facilities and the related infrastructure demonstrate the shared interests of all sides of the conflict in safeguarding these strategic assets even in the current desolate landscape of the country.

The Syrian Arab Republic is facing existential, economic, security and social threats. The continued deterioration of State institutions and the faltering ability of the public administration to provide essential goods and services is not only lowering the standard of living of the Syrian population further, but also driving individuals and communities towards sectarianism and fundamentalism. Specific planning and action to reverse these trends are critical in order to avoid the complete disintegration of the Syrian Arab Republic into a failed State. Towards this strategic objective, a revised approach to economic sanctions is needed, preserving

the viability of State institutions and public administration in supplying essential goods and services, and acknowledging the importance of local stakeholders in providing essential products and services.

When advocating a new approach to sanctions based on the urgent humanitarian and institutional crisis, strong international support is necessary. The peace initiative of the United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria can provide the political and diplomatic platform required: "modified economic sanctions" can serve as a negotiating instrument to incentivize all parties to focus on improving the conditions of the Syrian population and deliver on the immediate objective of de-escalating the conflict. In the broader context, this concerted effort should aim to preserve Syria's unity and sovereignty while laying the groundwork for the emergency aid phase towards the country's post-conflict reconstruction and economic recovery.

The primary focus should be on the supply of essential goods and commodities and the re-establishment some form of self-sustainable economic recovery going forward. The easing of banking restrictions should complement the relaxation of trade restrictions. Additional key aspects are funding requirements and potential sources. Facilitating the repatriation of private capital and businesses should also be part of the new policy measures aimed at dismantling Syria's war economy structures and kick-starting job creation, with particular attention to the energy sector, to support longer-term post-conflict reconstruction.

The proposal is to design, implement and monitor the retargeting and re-engineering of the economic sanctions imposed on Syria to address the urgent needs of the Syrian people through mechanisms involving United Nations agencies, other international organizations and development partners, particularly the European Union.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

[Original: English]
[28 April 2015]

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) does not agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. The attention of States parties is drawn to the Doha Mandate (TD/500/Add.1), adopted at the third United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held in April 2012.

UNCTAD reports that the United States embargo against Cuba has had significant negative effects on the Cuban economy and on the standard of living of Cuban citizens. The Government of Cuba reports that at current prices the embargo has inflicted damage worth more than $116,888 million. The losses are attributed to the additional costs incurred by the Cuban Government, enterprises and citizens in obtaining goods, services and finance. The embargo severely limits Cuba's development of strategic sectors such as science and technology, as well as of industries such as information systems and communications. In cases where embargo measures are applied extraterritorially, third countries can be affected in their businesses and investments.